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ABSTRACT

The Ministers of 20 countries took part and reached a wide measure of agreement on the 2 chief themes of this conference: policy and planning in postsecondary education, and mobility of students, teachers, and research workers. A third theme of the conference was the activities of international organizations working in the field of education. Recommendations of the ministers incude: (1) participation in education of people of different social or regional origin, and of both sexes and all ages is needed; (2) ensuring the growth of postsecondary education by asking international organizations to study ways of improving the efficiency of the system; (3) reforming course work and the development of new educational technology; and (4) participation by staff and students in the decisionmaking bodies of postsecondary education is encouraged. The conference agreed that the mobility of highly qualified specialists and research workers would contribute to the most efficient use of manpower and equipment resources. (HS)

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Second Part

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SEVENTH CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN MINISTERS OF EDUCATION

Brussels, 8th-10th June 1971

The Seventh Conference of European Ministers of Education was held at the invitation of the Belgian Government in Brussels from 8 to 10 June 1971. The Conference was presided over by Mr. P. Vermeylen, Belgian Minister of Education.

The Ministers of twenty countries took part and reached a wide measure of agreement on the two chief themes of the Conference :

— *Policy and planning in post-secondary education, and*

— *Mobility of students and teachers in higher education and of research workers.*

Representatives of the international organisations concerned — UNESCO, OECD, the Council of Europe and the European Communities — attended as observers and presented information documents on their education activities. Mr. Lujo Toncic-Sorinj, Secretary General of the Council of Europe was Secretary to the Conference and delivered the opening statement.

Policy and planning in post-secondary education

Having held an exchange of views on the reports on this theme by Mr. A. Dubois, Belgian Minister of Education, by Mr. J. Grosheide, Netherlands Secretary of State, and by Professor W. Taylor of Bristol University, the Conference adopted a wide-ranging resolution summing up their views on the main policy issues in post-secondary education.

The Ministers agreed that educational policy and planning, guided by such goals as development of the individual, economic growth, welfare, democratisation and internationalisation, called for wider participation in education of people of different social or regional origin, sex and age, and in conditions which ensure effective equality of chances of success.

They felt that education and in particular post-secondary education would continue to increase throughout the seventies but that the rate of expansion would depend on available resources. To ensure the growth of post-secondary education the Conference asked international organisations to study ways of improving the efficiency of the system.

The need was stressed also for integrating the policy and planning of the various stages of education. In particular upper secondary and post-secondary education must be conceived as interdependent and continuing and recurrent education for adults must be given its appropriate place.

Greater diversity was advocated in the pattern and duration of studies in order to meet individual aspirations and professional needs. The Ministers considered that it was necessary to ensure effective co-ordination between post-secondary institutions and to minimise differences of status between them. The Universities should remain nuclei of research and post-graduate studies but teaching in all institutions at post-secondary level should reflect the findings of research.

Another key issue in any reorganisation was the reform of study courses in which representatives of the professions, employers and employees might co-operate with staff, students and academic experts. Several recent measures which might be more widely adopted were discussed including :

HE 002 674

short occupation-oriented courses, alternating study and employment opportunities, the use of a greater variety of knowledge assessment techniques, the introduction of learning blocks and unit/credit systems, mid-career sabbaticals and continuing or recurrent post-secondary studies for adults. The Ministers also encouraged the development of new educational technology not only in traditional but also in experimental and multi-media settings.

Finally, the Conference welcomed responsible participation by staff and students in the decision-making bodies of post-secondary education. Such participation, they felt, had proved helpful both to the individual institutions and to the system as a whole.

The Ministers expressed the hope that their common outlook on these main policy issues would promote the development of national policies on convergent lines. They invited governments to continue co-operation through the international organisations on new trends and developments in post-secondary education and asked the Council of Europe and OECD to pursue work in their specific areas of competence.

Mobility of students, teachers and research workers

Having examined the report presented by the Committee of Senior Officials and taken note of the activities of international organisations in this field, the Conference adopted a resolution on measures designed to encourage mobility of students and teachers in higher education and of research workers.

The Conference agreed that the mobility of highly qualified specialists and research workers would contribute to the most efficient use of manpower and equipment resources.

To encourage movements between European education institutions, the Ministers called for the creation of national centres or the extension of existing services to provide information on foreign post-secondary education and qualifications, equivalence arrangements, and scholarship possibilities abroad. These would co-operate at international level, preferably by making use of the services existing within the framework of international organisations. The Ministers also recommended that it should be permissible under the law to appoint foreign nationals to teaching and research posts. The Ministers further stressed that no policies should be adopted that would totally exclude foreign students from any branch of study.

The Council of Europe was asked by the Ministers to consider the possibility of establishing a system of equivalences based on the subject, the duration and the level of the studies undertaken, and to work on a "European status" for higher education teachers and research workers.

Education of immigrants

The Ministers considered that particular attention should be given to the education of immigrants and decided to envisage holding an ad hoc Conference on this theme at Strasbourg in 1972 to which other Ministers and services might be invited. The Conference would deal both with the education and training of adult and adolescent immigrants and with the education of children.

Education of the 16-19 age group

The Ministers accepted the invitation of the Swiss Government to hold their Eighth Conference in Switzerland in May 1973. The theme will be "The needs of the 16-19 age group, both in full-time and part-time education".

Press Communique

2

Opening Statement by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

As Secretary of the European Conference of Ministers of Education, I have the privilege, from time to time, of being the guest of a member State of the Council for Cultural Co-operation. On those occasions, I find myself in the midst of debates on subjects fundamental to European civilisation and of a political importance which has perhaps not yet been sufficiently emphasised. A case in point is the present Conference whose agenda contains subjects which, in many respects, seem to me precisely of that kind.

In the first place, *post-secondary education* : The current trend is to make it the keystone of all education. From the pre-school to those forms of education proper to the most advanced ages, the system adopted for post-secondary education governs our options in the other categories. Our modern thinking is leading us towards setting up a system of « permanent education » which may well be the educational revolution of the twentieth century, as compulsory schooling was of the nineteenth. Permanent education, it is hoped, will make man, throughout his lifetime, master of his fate by enabling him constantly to imbibe at the founts of education and culture new strength to face the problems of a highly technical civilisation. Far from diminishing the part played by higher education, this new humanism should on the contrary enhance it by making it the kernel of all human enrichment. The university's main task hitherto has been to train people once and for all for a career. Now, like other post-secondary establishments, it will have to be ready to receive them at any time in order to help them re-adjust to new situations. It is therefore right and proper that you should have chosen for your Conference a theme that is central to any educational reform.

But, speaking now as a politician, I see a second aspect which in my view is just as important as the first. Behind a *conflict* of systems I see one *of values*. Behind student unrest, I see just as much a social and political problem as an academic one. Our century claims to be a period of economic and technical development. Progress in this respect has been so spectacular that it tends to hypnotise the masses. But we incline too easily to be blinded by those specific successes into forgetting that man is infinitely more complex than a machine and has needs that cannot be satisfied in the same way. The present generation will have seen quantity prevail over quality. Politicians like yourselves cannot contemplate with complacency such backwardness in the qualitative development of our civilisation. Education is precisely the natural link between quantity and quality. We have, I believe, done enough to encourage quantitative development. I even wonder whether we have not reached a limit which it would be dangerous to exceed. All our efforts should now be channelled towards redressing the scales and putting the social and human sciences once more in a position to give our lives the balance they require by emphasising ever improving their quality.

The second theme of the Conference concerns the *mobility of students, teachers and research workers*. Here again, a meeting such as yours cannot remain indifferent to the political aspects. Mobility must be achieved methodically by making the most of favourable political circumstances which render it desirable and possible between certain States. But we must not be held back by temporary barriers. We must look beyond mobility within one group of European States to mobility for Europe as a whole, from East to West, and even between Europe and outside countries, in the form of meetings or exchanges.

Lastly, the third theme of your Conference, concerned with *the activities of international organisations working in the field of education*, marks considerable progress in co-operation between the Conference and international organisations. As hitherto your Conferences have been of an *ad hoc* nature, the first duty of the Secretary General is to pass on to each of them the tradition and experience handed down from the previous ones as well as to inform the Ministers participating of any action taken at European level in the interval between two meetings. The reports of the four international organisations — UNESCO, OECD, the European Communities and the Council of Europe — working partially or exclusively in Europe in the sphere of education, give a clear picture of what has been done in that respect during the two years between this Conference and the previous one. We are grateful for the effort they have made and hope that your discussions will lead to an even more efficient co-ordination of intergovernmental activities. That co-ordination is indeed absolutely essential, on the one hand, to ensure that the Conferences of Ministers derive full benefit from the work going on under the programmes of the various organisations and, on the other, to provide

those organisations with feedback reflecting the points of view of the user governments.

Without embarking on a discussion which is due to take place at this session, I should like to say that the role and function of *conferences of specialised ministers* are for some organisations, and for the Council of Europe in particular, a political issue which can only be settled in a political context.

I should like to clear up right from the start of the proceedings the question of the respective competences in the sphere of international co-operation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the specialised Ministers. Our Consultative Assembly settled the question in its Recommendation 567 which distinguishes plainly between the purely *technical* control of specialised problems (for which the specialised Ministers are properly competent) and the *political* control of those same problems (which is the indisputable province of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs).

Those among you who also meet in the framework of the European Communities know that in that organisation the Council of Ministers may, as and when it wishes and by a simple substitution of persons, change itself into a Council of specialised Ministers. In the Council of Europe, however, Article 14 of our Statute does not allow the Committee of Ministers to become a specialised committee. We have therefore to seek other procedures to arrive at a result which will render the same services to the governments. Thus the Council of Europe is at present concerned with seven specialised Conferences of Ministers which, although constitutionally independent of our Organisation, nevertheless receive from the Council of Europe the administrative assistance they need, and also political support. The best proof of that co-ordination of effort is that I myself act as Secretary General to each of those Conferences as I do for yours. Those already in existence or in course of institution are :

— The European Conference of Ministers of Education ;

— The European Conference of Ministers of Justice ;

— The European Conference of Ministers responsible for the Preservation and Rehabilitation of the Cultural and Architectural Heritage ;

— The Ministerial Conference on the Environment ;

— The European Conference of Ministers responsible for Family Affairs ;

— The European Conference of Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs.

While keeping their independence, all these Conferences report to the Council of Europe. The two Council organs — the Committee of Ministers and the Consultative Assembly — can thus take action on conference resolutions by incorporating them into the Council's Work Programme. Forms of co-operation similar to the one I have just described (and which, I stress, is peculiar to the Council of Europe) exist, or might be brought into being, with the other organisations invited to your Conferences.

There is one point to which I should like to draw your attention. This Seventh Conference inaugurates the *second decade* of the enlarged European Conferences of Ministers of Education. This anniversary occurs at an important moment in the history of your meetings. Constructive proposals were recently made, at your Versailles Conference in particular, by the French Minister of Education, regarding the creation of a European Office of Education. The Consultative Assembly supported that project, stressing the importance of making the proposed Office available to all the member States of the Council for Cultural Co-operation. Pending a decision in the matter, it is essential to seek new, flexible methods of co-operation between the international organisations concerned. For that purpose, more systematic use should be made of your Committee of Senior Officials to co-ordinate the work of the international organisations associated with the Conference. That one practical step would in itself represent considerable progress.

Allow me, here, to emphasise the importance of one particular aspect of the matter. One of the documents submitted to your Conference contains proposals recommending new working methods for the Committee of Senior Officials who prepare the Conferences and assist you in conducting them.

The meetings of Senior Officials render you valuable service because they make an efficient contribution to improving European co-operation, not only thanks to the liaison they establish between your Conference and the organisations concerned but also by lightening the bonds between these organisations themselves. In that context the meetings of Senior Officials constitute an essential *link in the two-way chain of European co-operation* between organisations and user governments. The latter thus have a unique opportunity of expressing their points of view at a meeting where all the organisations concerned are represented.

I should now like to call your attention to another aspect of the problem of European co-operation in the sphere of education, to which there are two approaches.

The first consists in thinking that the greater the number of countries the more difficult it is to reach unanimity, at least if one is more concerned with unanimity of action than with unanimity of good intentions. Here *the more restricted framework* constitutes, in a way, a small nucleus which other States can join for specific activities ("satellite" system).

On the other hand, one might wonder whether *a wider framework*, for example that of the member States of the European Cultural Convention, is not more suited to present European requirements. It would give the opportunity for a group of countries to undertake activities of particular interest to them but with which the other States do not wish (for the time being at least) to be associated. This system has already been put to the test successfully in the Council of Europe since the decision in 1959 to transfer to the Council the educational, cultural and social activities pursued until then in the framework of the seven WEU member States. Those activities have been going on ever since in the Council of Europe framework, while keeping their own character and being reserved, under a partial agreement, to those countries specifically interested in them. This policy has enabled countries determined to make rapid progress in certain sectors to do so with the help of existing machinery and the *ad hoc* resources which the governments concerned were ready to devote to the purpose.

And now I come to the very pleasant duty of expressing to our hosts, the Belgian Ministers, the Council of Europe's warm thanks and congratulations.

Thanks first, for having organised, for the second time, a Conference of Ministers in this same sumptuous setting of the Royal Museum of Art and History. I had the pleasure of attending, and addressing as I am doing today, the first Conference of the European Ministers responsible for the Preservation and Rehabilitation of the Cultural Heritage of Monuments and Sites, held in November 1969, under the chairmanship of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Liège. Then, as now, the Belgian Government gave us the same warm welcome.

Lastly, I should like to congratulate the Belgian Government, especially the Ministers organising this Conference and all those assisting them, on the expert scientific and technical preparation of this important European event.

To conclude with an expression of hope : may this Conference, like those preceding it, prove a jumping-off ground towards major achievements, despite the difficulties they present. Any decision implies a risk, but also means an act of faith. I dare to hope that the conclusions of your Conference will constitute an important step towards the building of Europe.